



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Washington, DC 20423

Office of Economics, Environmental Analysis and Administration

February 21, 2007

The Honorable Lavina Washines, Chairwoman
Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Washington
P.O. Box 151
Toppenish, WA 98948-0151

**RE: Section 106 Consultation for STB Finance Docket No. 34936,
Northern Columbia Basin Railroad Project – Construction and
Operation – In Grant County, Washington**

Dear Chairwoman Washines:

The Surface Transportation Board (Board) and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) are beginning an environmental review for a proposed rail construction project called the Northern Columbia Basin Railroad Project. The project is located in the Moses Lake area of Grant County, Washington. I have enclosed a map of the proposed project area for your reference.

The purpose of the Northern Columbia Basin Railroad Project is to attract new rail-dependent businesses to the Moses Lake area, and to encourage the continued use and preservation of rail in the region. The three components of the proposed project include:

- Building a new rail line from Wheeler to Parker Horn;
- Improving existing track between Parker Horn and the Grant County International Airport (GCIA); and
- Extending the existing Columbia Basin Railroad's track to the industrial areas just south and east of the GCIA.

In order to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969; Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act; the Board's environmental rules; WSDOT requirements; and other applicable Federal and state laws and regulations, the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) and WSDOT will prepare an environmental document that evaluates the potential environmental effects of the proposed project, including any reasonable and feasible alternatives to the proposed route.

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Because the proposed project may be located within an area historically affiliated with the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (Yakama Nation), the Board is formally initiating government-to-government consultation with the Yakama Nation as a Federally recognized tribe. Pursuant to Section 106, we would like consultation to address historic resource issues, including whether properties of religious and cultural significance to your tribe are potentially located within the proposed project area. See 36 CFR 800.2(c)(4).

For the proposed project, the Board and WSDOT are co-lead agencies. Federal, state, or local agencies, including at least one Federal agency, may act as joint lead agencies to prepare an environmental impact statement. See 40 CFR 1501.5(b). As the lead Federal agency, the Board is ultimately responsible for government-to-government consultations with Federally recognized tribes. Because WSDOT has specific expertise in the state of Washington regarding tribal issues, we recommend that the Yakama Nation work directly with WSDOT regarding the specific activities involved in identifying and addressing the concerns and interest of the Yakama Nation. **The WSDOT contact is Elizabeth Phinney, Environmental Coordinator for the WSDOT Rail Office. Ms. Phinney may be contacted at (360) 705-7902 or phinnee@wsdot.wa.gov.**

If you would prefer not to work directly with WSDOT or if you have any specific concerns regarding our government-to-government consultation responsibilities, please let us know in your response to this letter. **We will consult with you directly regarding specific issues as you feel appropriate and as required under Federal law.**

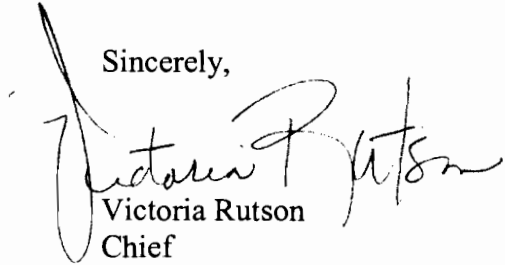
Please inform SEA if you would like Section 106 consulting party status for the proposed project. We would appreciate receiving your response within 30 days following your receipt of this letter. Due to the delay in receiving mail at the Board, e-mail responses are strongly recommended in addition to hard copies of your response via regular mail.

Please send your comments to:
Surface Transportation Board
Section of Environmental Analysis
Attn: Christa Dean
Washington D.C. 20423-0001

Please send your emails to:
christa.dean@stb.dot.gov

If you have any questions about this proposed project, please do not hesitate to contact Christa Dean with SEA at (202) 565-1606 or Elizabeth Phinney with WSDOT at (360) 705-7902. Thank you for your time and we look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victoria Rutson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Victoria" and last name "Rutson" clearly distinguishable.

Victoria Rutson

Chief

Section of Environmental Analysis

Enclosure

cc: Kate Valdez, Yakama THPO
Johnson Meninick, Yakama Cultural Resources
Phillip Rigdon, Yakama Natural Resources
Dr. Allyson Brooks, Washington SHPO
Colleen Jollie, WSDOT Tribal Liaison
Elizabeth Phinney, WSDOT Rail

